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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 000049

SIPDIS

WHA/FO CMCMULLEN, WHA/BSC MDRUCKER, BFRIEDMAN, MDASCHBACH  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2035/01/22

TAGS: PREL KPAO PGOV PA HA

SUBJECT: PARAGUAY PROCEEDS WITH HAITIAN AID

REF: A. ASUNCION 37; B. STATE 5871

CLASSIFIED BY: Rose Rakas, CDA; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (U) Paraguay's 13-person team arrived in Port-au-Prince early January 21 and co-located themselves with a Mexican contingent. The Paraguayan Red Cross and religious authorities launched local appeals for donations. Following PAO media interviews to highlight U.S. humanitarian contributions to Haiti, CDA delivered thanks and reftel B talking points to numerous government officials.

¶2. (C) CDA Perry Holloway spoke by phone January 21 with Secretariat for National Emergencies (SEN) chief Camilo Soares, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Ministers of the Interior and Treasury as well as other government officials. He conveyed U.S. appreciation for Paraguay's relief effort and sought to dispel misinformation about U.S. intentions in Haiti. Soares thanked the CDA for perceived help in obtaining permission for Paraguayan relief officials to overnight at the airport upon arrival. (Note: Soares represents the far left in President Lugo's cabinet, identifies with President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, and has traditionally taken a hard line against the U.S., ridiculing as small our September 2008 USD 50,000 donation to Paraguayan drought victims. Soares reached out to CDA January 13 in conversations reported in reftel A to ask for U.S. assistance, and has since been in regular contact. End note.)

¶3. (U) Local press coverage has been muted, but largely positive. Leading daily newspaper ABC Color ran a color photo of Sec. Clinton in Haiti over the caption "Earthquake shows new face of Washington."

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Paraguay's personnel contribution to the relief effort is a point of pride. U.S. efforts have helped to promote goodwill for the U.S., which is evidenced most obviously by kind, albeit private, words from a traditionally anti-U.S. cabinet official. END COMMENT.  
HOLLOWAY